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Soviet Scientists' Exercise in Hypocrisy

In the rush to interpret the Geneva summit, it might be wise to keep in mind the cynicism of President Reagan's adversaries across the negotiating table. No exercise in hypocrisy is too extreme for the Soviet establishment.

As "Exhibit A" we offer the Kremlin's first response to Reagan's "Star Wars" initiative in the spring of 1983. Though the Soviets had been doing research on space-defense technology for perhaps 20 years and had been running tests since 1968, the first movement of the Kremlin-orchestrated propaganda symphony was an anguished letter in Pravda, signed by a group of Soviet scientists, attacking Reagan's proposal. It was titled: "Appeal to the Scientists of the World."

The letter deplored the "Strategic Defense Initiative" and bemoaned the fact that the purity of scientific research was being sullied by military application. Several of the letter's signers stumped Western Europe to recruit support among the scientific fraternity. One of them, Y.P. Velikhov, has lectured several times on American college campuses.

Exactly who were these pious protesters? The CIA did some background checking, and we've seen the secret list identifying the signers of the anti-Star Wars appeal by the jobs they actually perform.

With ill-concealed sarcasm, the CIA report summarizes its findings this way: "The sincerity of this letter can be judged by the fact that many of its signatories are heavily involved in the Soviet Union's own extensive efforts to develop both offensive and defensive strategic weaponry."

Among the more blatant hypocrites who signed the Soviet appeal were:

- P.D. Grushin. He heads the Soviet Union's design bureau for antiaircraft and antiballistic missiles, including interceptor missiles now deployed around Moscow and another missile in the development stage. (The United States has no comparable weapon deployed.)
- V.S. Semenikhin. The Central Intelligence Agency identifies him as "the leading figure in developing command, control and communications systems for antiaircraft and antimissile use."
- B.V. Bunkin. He is an important figure in the development of radar and other key components of weapons systems for strategic defense.
- V.S. Aduevsky. Long involved in strategic systems design, he has moved in recent years into the area of space systems. He now has responsibility for a number of military space projects, including a space-based laser gun.
- Velikhov. The darling of anti-Star Wars activists on American campuses has been one of the "driving forces in Soviet laser weapons development for at least 15 years," according to the CIA. For several years Velikhov was director of the Institute of Atomic Energy Laboratories at Troitsk, where military lasers are being developed. Two of the other "driving forces" in laser weapons, N.G. Basov and A.M. Prokhorov, also signed the letter.

If the Soviet scientists' appeal were to be heeded, of course, and U.S. efforts to develop strategic defense technology were abandoned, it would leave the Soviets without competition in the field.

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